

The Dragons of Heaven

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A/N

Could there be dragons in Heaven? Is it possible to reconcile such a belief with what the Bible says? And can we work HTTYD into such a mix without being blasphemous? I think so, in a fanfic kind of a way. Rated K-plus, just to be safe; the language is all K.

This might be the weirdest story I've written to date. The theology in the story (which is fiction) will probably offend some Christians, and my Christian beliefs (which are not fiction) will probably offend some non-Christians. Some may say this isn't really a HTTYD fanfic. All I'll say is, these ideas pop into my head and give me no rest until I've written them down, and if you don't like it, I'm not offended by that. Every Bible verse quoted here is copied verbatim from one of the well-known translations; you can look them up and see if I'm misapplying them or not. The other thoughts are my own, as far as I know, and I don't suggest that anyone adopt them as doctrine. But wouldn't it be nice if they were true?

****O****

The hard part was over. By "the hard part," I mean dying. They say, "Everybody wants to go to Heaven, but nobody wants to die." At least it was quick. One moment, I was riding home from a party with friends; then that oncoming car swerved into our lane and... it was

over. Now here I was, in Heaven.

I won't attempt to describe what I'd seen so far. It was too amazing; I don't have the words. I'd faced my judgment at the Bema Seat of Christ, where I learned that some of the "important" stuff I'd done was actually worthless, and some of the "worthless" stuff I'd done was actually very important. I'd asked about all the stupid things I'd done in life, and He had reminded me that He'd paid for all that stuff on the cross, and my faith in Him was the beginning and the end of my role in the matter. I'd had a reunion with the friends and family who had gone on before me; I'd seen some people whom I never expected to see here, and missed a few whom I was sure I'd find here.

At last, I worked up the courage to say, "Lord, I hope You don't mind, but I have a lot of questions."

"Of course you do," He smiled. "Everyone does. I usually assign an angel to each new soul who arrives here, to answer all those questions and help you get used to being here. But for you, and for a few others who think like you, I've reserved a special kind of helper. Take as much time as you need with him; he is here to help you." He gestured with His hand.

I stared. It wasn't the first time I was dumbfounded since I got here, and it probably wouldn't be the last time, either, but this one really floored me. Angels have wings and look awesome. My special helper had wings and looked awesome, too. But this—this was just about the last thing I ever expected to see in Heaven.

"My special helper is a _Deadly Nadder?_" I finally blurted out.

"Please, just 'Nadder' is fine," the dragon answered with a toothy smile. "I'm not deadly. At least, I'd never be deadly to you." He waved his tail; I noticed that his tail spines were rounded off, not sharp and pointed. His voice was a smooth, melodic baritone, not something I ever would have associated with a reptile.

"But—but I was always taught that dragons were evil," I stammered.

"That's a common misunderstanding," he nodded as we began to walk together. "Didn't anybody ever read Psalm 148:7, where it says, 'Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps'? How could the dragons praise Him if they were evil?"

"I think the new Bibles called them sea monsters, not dragons," I said quietly.

"The exact meaning of that word in the Hebrew got lost over the centuries," he agreed, "but no matter how you interpret it, it still means something very big, non-human, and capable of praising God. Then there's the Leviathan, from Job 41. That creature has 'dragon' written all over it. A creature like that is scary and powerful, but it never says that the Leviathan is evil."

"Didn't I read a footnote in my Bible that says the Leviathan was probably a crocodile?" I asked timidly.

The Nadder rolled his eyes. "Oh, please! 'Its snorting throws out flashes of light; its eyes are like the rays of dawn. Flames stream from its mouth; sparks of fire shoot out.' Does that sound like a crocodile to you?" He breathed out some flames and sparks of fire, just to prove his point. "I don't know where some of your theologians and Bible commentators got their ideas! Why was it so hard to just read the Word and believe it?"

"That was another one of my questions," I said, "but I'd like to clear up the dragon thing first. I know it says that Satan took the form of a dragon."

"Yes, a big red one," the Nadder replied. "It was one of his favorite forms to take" and remember, he is a spirit being, so he doesn't have a natural physical form. He appears the way he wants to, and he liked the form of a dragon because it's big, powerful, frightening, and" He looked to me to finish his sentence.

"Uhh, it's capable of speech?" I guessed.

He nodded. "It's no coincidence that most cultures believe in dragons, and most of them believe that dragons could talk. Whether it's a Western culture that feared dragons, or an Eastern culture that respected them, they all thought dragons could speak. What does that tell you?"

I thought for a moment. "Does it mean there used to be talking dragons all over the world? Real ones, not just mythical ones?"

"The Bible didn't invent the idea of dragons," the Nadder went on. "The writers of Scripture wrote about dragons for the same reason that secular authors wrote about them" because everyone knew what a dragon was and what it could do."

I thought some more. "So if dragons were real, and they were supposed to praise the Lord" then why were they seen as evil?"

The Nadder hung his head. "One of us did something terrible. He gave himself over to Satan, in exchange for promises of power and greatness, and Satan used him against humanity in the worst way imaginable."

"You mean burning villages and eating people?"

"No, much worse than that," he said quietly. "He used that dragon to deceive Adam and Eve, and lead them into sin."

"A dragon did that?" I wondered. "But every Bible I ever read says it was a serpent! That means a snake, doesn't it?"

"Think about it," he replied. "When God cursed the serpent, He made it go on its belly and eat dust for the rest of its life. If it was a snake, then it was already going on its belly and eating dust. What kind of punishment would that be? It wouldn't be a punishment at all, just a restatement of the facts! That curse would mean something only if the serpent had some other way of getting around, which God took away as punishment."

"God took your wings," I said softly. I hoped it wasn't an insensitive comment.

"And our legs," he nodded sadly. "Our entire race was cursed for the actions of one individual, just as your race was cursed for the actions of Adam and Eve. We were changed from the most physically glorious animal God ever made, into a race of wingless, legless, voiceless, friendless..." His voice broke off.

"Okay, I think I'm following this," I said shakily, "but one thing doesn't make sense. If dragons are so big and scary, and the devil likes to dress up as one, then why did Adam and Eve listen to that dragon when he tempted them? Why didn't they run away from him as soon as he opened his mouth?"

The Nadder drew a deep breath and let it out. "That's one of the saddest parts of the story. We weren't created to scare people or hurt them. We were created to help them.

"Remember, when God was done creating, He said that everything He'd made was very good. That included the dragons. He made us for a reason. You know, of course, that some animals are smarter than others? God made them that way. A chimpanzee or a dolphin isn't a better creature than a sheep or a sparrow; it just fills a different place in God's design. So it was with us dragons. He gave us minds that were nearly as powerful as a human mind, so we could understand you and work beside you. He gave us mouths that could speak so you would understand us. The one thing God did not do for us was to create us in His image. That privilege was reserved only for humanity. Even the angels, who are far more intelligent and powerful than we are, can't make that claim.

"We were made to help humanity. We didn't complete the man, the way the woman did, but we were placed on earth for a very special purpose that no other creature could fulfill. God knew that, when people looked up at the heavens, they would dream of flying. Nearly everyone does it at one time or another, I'm told; that longing is part of the human condition. God made the dragons so people could fly with us — not to take you from place to place, although we could do that, but mostly just to share the joy of flying with you. That's why we're so big, compared to you; we had to be big enough to carry you. While I never had that pleasure on earth, I knew a few dragons who actually went flying with Adam and Eve before the fall."

"So that means dragons were in the Garden of Eden," I thought out loud. "And that would mean that Adam and Eve were comfortable around you. They liked you." I looked up into the dragon's eyes. "They trusted you."

"They trusted us completely," he said sadly. "And when one dragon abused that trust in the worst way possible, two races were plunged into sin." His eyes gleamed with tears; his voice nearly broke.

"As I said, we weren't made in God's image," he went on after a moment. "There could be no redeemer to pay for our sins. The dragons who were alive at the time of the fall, and who never chose to sin, were allowed to regain their original form in Heaven, just as a man who loses an arm to amputation will get it back in Heaven. But all the dragons who were hatched after the curse — they were nothing but brute beasts with the minds of small reptiles. Their spirits went down into the earth when they died, just like any other animal. After the fall, there were no more dragons, just the Leviathans, who didn't

last very long, and the snakes, who remained as a kind of mocking reminder to us. There are only a handful of dragons in Heaven, for that reason.

"But humanity still remembered the dragons, long after we were gone. In the East, they remembered us as we once were â€" wise, friendly, and trustworthy. In the West, they remembered that one huge red dragon â€" violent, cruel, and crafty. Some remembered us in different forms, like the ki-rin or the feathered serpent. But, after all these centuries, most people still have a pretty good idea of what a dragon is.

"We watched from heaven as mankind stumbled along, trying to deal with their own curse. We stood amazed, just like the angels, when we saw the great plan of redemption unfold." He shook his huge head. "There were a few of us who begged God to let us fly down, rescue Christ off the cross, and deal out some fiery justice to the ones who crucified Him. God just said, 'Watch and see.' I'm glad He denied our request; if He'd agreed, you wouldn't be here. It was hard to watch Him go through all that agonyâ€¦ but oh, the joy on the third day!" The dragon looked away for a moment, savoring a memory, before he went on.

"We also watched as our species became a byword for evil. In your stories, killing a dragon became a mark of righteousness, as well as a mark of bravery. When the false prophet arises in the last days to deceive many, the Bible says he will speak like a dragon, which is just more proof that dragons can speak. But we also saw, here and there, a few people like you who weren't afraid of the idea of dragons. You realized that there could be good dragons as well as bad ones, and you had dreams of meeting a good dragon someday."

"It's true!" I exclaimed. "I always wanted to meet a dragon... maybe even ride on one. I never told my Christian friends about it, because I figured they all thought dragons were evil. But when I first saw 'How to Train Your Dragon,' something clicked inside, as though I'd been waiting all my life to see something like that. It restored my faith in dragons, if that makes any sense. It stirred up all those old, impossible dreams about meeting a dragon someday, somehow."

He smiled. "You waited all your life, even though the sensible side of you told you it could never happen. Today, your dream has begun to come true. But I've been waiting for thousands of years for _my_ dream to come true. I was made to be a friend and helper for humanity, but thanks to the fall, I never had my chance to do it. Today, after all those centuries of waiting, I can finally begin to fulfill my purpose; I can finally be what God meant for me to be; because now, at long last, _you're_ here with me."

I couldn't help myself. I threw my arms around his scaly blue neck and hugged him. The only reason I didn't cry was because I knew Jesus promised He'd wipe away every tear from our eyes, and I didn't want to distract Him from more important things, just because some silly newly-arrived soul got all emotional at the thought of making a dragon happy.

I have no idea how long I hugged him; time works differently in Heaven. But I finally let him go. I think both our eyes were shining by then. "You said you had a lot of questions," he began.

"I do," I nodded. "I've been dying to find out how old the earth really is, and whether Paul and Barnabas ever reconciled their friendship, and what really happened on the Marie Celeste, and all kinds of other things. But right now, there's only one question on my mind." I took a deep breath. "Can we go flying?"

He blinked hard, smiled, and bent down. "I've been waiting for thousands of years for you to ask me that." I scrambled onto his back â€" it was easy, as though I'd been doing it all my life â€" and the next thing I knew, we were off the ground and gaining height fast. For a moment, I thought I could hear the "Test Drive" music playing in my head. The wind was blowing hard in my face; I could feel his wing muscles pulsing beneath me; and it all felt so natural, so completely normal, that I wondered if I could ever go back to just walking again.

"In my mortal life, I was afraid of heights," I admitted.

"There's no fear in Heaven," he answered, turning his head so he could look at me. "Fear, and a lot of other things, will never plague you again." The view from half a mile up was breathtaking, and we were still climbing. Far away in the distance, I thought I saw another dragon darting in and out of the white, puffy clouds. It might have been a Stormcutter, but it was hard for me to tell.

I had a sudden thought. "Are there any Night Furies in Heaven?"

"Just one," my dragon friend grinned, "and I think you can guess Who rides him. I suppose He sometimes wants to take a break from riding that white horse all the time."

I glanced down again at the ground far below us. "I didn't foresee any of this when I used to think about Heaven," I mused.

"That is what the Scriptures mean when they say, 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him'," he replied. "There are more wonders here than we could ever discover in a thousand years. But we've got more than a thousand years â€" we've got all eternity. We're going to explore every one of those wonders, you and me, side by side, the way it was meant to be from the beginning, and we'll praise God for those wonders together."

I'll admit it; I did cry at that point. But the wind whipping past my face blew my tears away, so nobody had to wipe them.

The End

(except, in eternity, there is no end)

End
file.